

U.S. EPA Technical Assistance to the Freely Associated States

EPA provides technical support, but no funding, to the Pacific Island nations of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and Federated States of Micronesia, known collectively as the “Freely Associated States” (FAS). EPA provides technical assistance in response to requests from the FAS.

EPA’s Pacific Islands Office coordinates EPA support to the FAS from a variety of EPA programs. Aside from the FAS, the Pacific Islands Office provides significant funding and other support to the territorial environmental offices and water utilities of American Samoa, CNMI, and Guam.

EPA has provided technical assistance for several years in the FAS, in partnership with DOI Office of Insular Affairs and State, on issues that affect the quality of people’s lives, such as drinking water and food safety, and ranging from preventing fuel spills to environmental impact assessment training. Some of the assistance is provided remotely from EPA offices in San Francisco; much is provided in country.

In late 2011, at the request of the RMI EPA, US EPA reviewed and provided comments on the Majuro Airport road realignment Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management Plan.

In addition, EPA serves a special role as Co-Chair, along with the Army, of the bi-national environmental standards team for the US Army at Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands. Several years ago, EPA served a consultative role as a cooperating agency for the Palau Road Project. While the current FAS countries were still Trust Territories, EPA provided construction grants which built much water and wastewater infrastructure still in place in the FAS.

Examples of EPA Technical Assistance in the Freely Associated States (FAS)

Improving the safety and availability of drinking water

FAS Lab Certification. EPA, in partnership with American Samoa EPA and CNMI DEQ, has provided training and certification to six environmental laboratories in Palau, the Marshall Islands, and FSM. All environmental labs in the FAS are now certified for analyzing drinking water and nearshore sea water.

Drinking Water Sanitary Surveys. EPA, in partnership with Guam EPA and US Public Health Service, has conducted sanitary surveys of the effectiveness of drinking water systems in Palau, the Marshall Islands, and FSM, and provided feedback and consultation to the water service providers and local regulators.

Water Operator Training. EPA, in partnership with Guam EPA and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), provided water operator training in Majuro, Marshall Islands.

Regulatory Review, Participation in Water Workshops, Consultation to Government Agencies. EPA, in partnership with US Public Health Service, Guam EPA, and SOPAC, has assisted FAS countries with water

regulatory review, participated in numerous water planning workshops, and has consulted on water matters. EPA has sought to partner with SOPAC to harmonize whatever assistance we're providing with that being provided by non-US entities.

Improving the safety and effectiveness of wastewater treatment

Regulatory and Technical Review, and Consultation to Government Agencies. EPA has provided regulatory and technical review and consultation to FAS governments, for example doing a wastewater system analysis for the Palau Environmental Quality Protection Board.

Making food safer from improper pesticides

Training and consultation. EPA, in partnership with the State of Hawaii, has provided training to local government staff in Palau, the Marshall Islands, and FSM on how to do pesticides inspections, take residue samples, and get lab analysis. We believe it is the first such training that FAS governments have received in the area of pesticides.

Reducing the chance of fuel spills

Training and consultation. EPA has sent a fuel tank inspector to all countries in the FAS to provide training on how to conduct inspections and prevent leaking tanks. EPA has provided this training to both the local environmental agencies, and to the owners and operators of gas stations and fuel tanks. Preventing fuel leaks is important because one pin-hole sized leak from a fuel tank can foul millions of gallons of groundwater. This was the first such training that local government staff received. While in the field, the EPA inspector identified several deficiencies which were subsequently corrected, preventing further leaks.

Reducing the risk from hazardous chemicals

Training, sampling, on-site treatment, and consultation. EPA has sent experts in the area of chemical contamination and emergency response to all countries in the FAS. Examples of assistance provided include: assessment (sampling) of potentially PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) contaminated equipment and sites in numerous locations throughout Palau; training on sampling techniques, field test equipment and hazards associated with PCBs; inspections of the some oil storage and chemical facilities; assistance with the development of the Palau Chemicals Management Program (a UN funded project); reviewed imports and assisted with an assessment of the existing regulations for the types of chemicals on island; assisted with program development; assistance in assessment of a plume of oil under an oil facility; technical assistance in site investigation; on-site neutralization of acids in Marshall Islands; and emergency response following declared disaster in FSM.

Other environmental training & consultation

EPA has also provided training plus consultation in: Environmental Impact Assessment, inspections and enforcement, environmental chemistry, solid waste, used tire disposal, and recycling.